Joshua Green's

STEDFASTNESS IN RELIGION,

EXPLAINED AND RECOMMENDED IN A

SERMON.

STEDFASTNESS IN *RELIGION*,

EXPLAINED AND RECOMMENDED

IN A

SERMON,

DELIVERED,

In the FIRST PARISH in WEST-SPRINGFIELD,

BY *JOSEPH LATHROP*, D.D.
MINISTER OF SAID PARISH,

On the 25th day of Auguſt, in the year 1796. It being the Day which cloſed the 40th year of his Miniſtry; and the year, which completed a Century from the Incorporation of ſaid Pariſh.

WEST-SPRINGFIELD:
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M,DCC,XCVII.

1. THESSALONIANS, III, 8.

FOR NOW WE LIVE, IF YE STAND FAST IN THE LORD.

THE ſtedfaſtneſs of a people in religion, is the life and happineſs of their Miniſter.

This is the ſentiment here expreſſed—a ſentiment which every good Miniſter can realize. His relation to his people commences with a peculiar regard & friendſhip. Long acquaintance and uninterrupted harmony with them, continued labours for them, and repeated kindneſſes from them, their candid acceptance of his Miniſtry, and his hope that it has been uſeful among them, will all contribute to ſtrengthen the attachment. When age or infirmity ſhall lead him to contemplate the approaching diſſolution of his connection, he will [illegible] new concern, leſt they turn away from the truth; and an ardent deſire, that they may be more eſtabliſhed in the faith, as they have been taught. Under the decays of bodily ſtrength, and in the proſpect of his final remove, he can ſay, 'Now I live, if ye ſtand faſt in the Lord.'

Your own Miniſter, my brethren, is not wholly a ſtranger to ſuch feelings, as have been deſcribed.

The preſent year completes a century, ſince a Religious

gious Society was formed in this place. And *this day* completes the fortieth year, ſince my relation to you commenced. My Miniſtry has been twice as long, as that of your firſt Paſtor; and almoſt five years longer, than that of my immediate predeceſſor. The *day* reminds us of the relation ſubſiſting between us: The *length* of *time*, which this relation has continued, reminds us, that its diſſolution is at hand.

Your preſent attendance in the houſe of God I have requeſted, that I might addreſs you, on ſome important matters, under the impreſſion, which the *day* will naturally make on *your* minds, as well as *my own*.

The ſubſtance of my exhortation will be that, which the text and the ſeaſon ſuggeſt, "Stand faſt in the Lord.'

I ſhall illuſtrate the words in applying them to you.

1. Stand faſt in the *faith* of the Goſpel; and repel, with indignation, every attempt to ſeduce you from it.

If you believe there is a God who governs the world, and men are accountable creatures, then you believe there is ſuch a thing as religion. And if there is any ſuch thing, it muſt be that which you find in the Goſpel. Here every vice is forbidden, and every virtue inculcated. Here the moſt powerful arguments are propoſed, and the moſt effectual aſſiſtances offered, to recommend and encourage a virtuous life. And here the moſt gracious proviſion is made to bring the guilty into a ſtate of pardon, and revive their deſponding hopes.

Whoever,

Whoever, therefore, makes light of the Goſpel, rejects, in ſubſtance, all religion: He leaves no ground on which his hope can ſecurely ſtand, and no information on which his faith can rationally depend. If he diſcards the idea of religion, he renounces his rationality, and takes rank among the brutes. If he frames to himſelf a religion, different from that taught by revelation, thus far it muſt be irrational and abſurd; neither conſiſtent with the character of God, nor adapted to the condition of man.

The honeſt and upright man, who doubts the divinity of the Goſpel, will carefully examine its evidences, and promptly yield to the conviction which they bring. Before he ventures to reject the Saviour propoſed, he will take time to anſwer this queſtion, 'To whom ſhall I go?' What better way of pardon ſhall I find—what better ſyſtem of virtue ſhall I contrive, than that which the Goſpel reveals? The ſerious examination of this queſtion will certainly lead him to a humble acquiescence in the chriſtian ſcheme.

If the Goſpel is divine and important, unbelief muſt involve us in awful guilt. The Saviour ſays, 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins.' 'Take heed, therefore, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God: But exhort one another daily, leſt any be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.'

This

This is a day, when *deiſm*, and the errors which lead to it, appear more openly, than they have uſually done. The errors moſt remarkably tending to infidelity are *univerſaliſm*, *fataliſm*, and *enthuſiaſm*.

Univerſaliſm, or the denial of future puniſhment, relaxes the morality of the Goſpel, and gives the reins to every luſt. *Fataliſm*, or the doctrine that the volitions and actions of men, whether good or bad, are all preciſely fixed and determined by an eternal and uncontrolable neceſſity, takes away all ſenſe of accountableneſs, and opens wide the door to vice and licentiouſneſs. *Enthuſiaſm*, or a reliance on imaginary revelations, made either to ourſelves, or to other people, ſuperſedes and ſets aſide the revelation which God has given us in the Goſpel. Thus they all eventually lead to, and uſually terminate in total infidelity.

The open, undiſguiſed appearance of infidelity in the preſent day is a conſequence of thoſe political convulſions and revolutions, which have agitated the world, & eſpecially this part of it. A ſpirit of liberty awakes enquiry, and emboldens an avowal of ſentiments, which once were ſtudiouſly concealed. When enquiry is rouſed, it makes many uſeful diſcoveries: but it will often run to exceſs. There is, in ſome minds, a certain vanity, which affects to diſcard common opinions, in order to diſplay a ſuperiority of genius. Free enquiry is, on the whole, favourable to truth; but its firſt efforts often produce temporary errors and confuſions.

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The imigration of foreigners, which is a natural conſequence of our national proſperity, and of the preſent convulſions in Europe, will be attended with real danger to the purity of religion. Many of theſe foreigners, being men of diſtinguiſhed education and fortune, as well as of licentious principles and manners, will introduce and diſſeminate among us the vices and errors of their own country. And libertine ſentiments are ſo congenial to the corruptions of the heart, ſo flattering to human pride, and ſo pleaſing to the natural love of novelty, that they eaſily gain credit and prevail.

As this is a day of danger, be watchful, leſt you hear the inſtructions, which cauſe to err from the words of knowledge. Let your minds be impreſſed with a ſenſe of the vaſt importance of religion. Examine and judge for yourſelves, what religion is. And ſee that its real temper be wrought in your hearts.

When a new ſentiment is offered to you, enquire, what is its natural influence—whether it encourages virtue, or only emboldens vice—whether it leads to repentance of ſin and amendment of life, or only pacifies conſcious guilt—whether it would make you better men, or rather ſet you looſe from the obligations of morality? Never embrace an opinion, which would corrupt your manners, or defeat the pure and benevolent influence of the Goſpel. Remember that religion is a matter on which depends the happineſs of man in his private, and in his ſocial capacity—in the preſent, and

in the future life; and let your regards to it be governed, not by the examples and opinions of men, but by the ſober dictates of reaſon, and the plain inſtructions of revelation.

2. As you would ſtand faſt in the Lord, you muſt maintain a chriſtian *profeſſion*, and ſupport the honour of it by a *correſpondent* life.

It is no uncommon thing, that perſons when they are called upon to enter into the church of God, plead in excuſe for their neglect, that the members of the church are as looſe and ungodly as many others. And they aſk, 'Why ſhould we join ourſelves to ſuch a ſociety, when its members differ little, or nothing from the men of the world?'

This is, indeed, an inſufficient excuſe. The obligations of religion lie on all, to whom the Goſpel comes. They ariſe not from a voluntary profeſſion, but from the command of God. If one ſees corruptions in a church, this is not a reaſon, why he ſhould turn away from it, and leave the corruptions to prevail; but rather a reaſon, why he ſhould join himſelf to it and cooperate with his brethren to rectify what is amiſs. It is, however, a known fact, that the looſe converſation of profeſſors diſcredits religion and obſtructs the growth of the church. Chriſtians are therefore to be blameleſs, the ſons God without rebuke in the midſt of a perverſe

perverſe nation, ſhining as lights in the world, and holding forth the word of life.

Walk, my brethen, as men bound for another world —as men ſeeking a better country. If you are abſorbed in the cares, addicted to the pleaſures, and conformed to the manners of this world, will it be thought, that there is any ſincerity in your profeſſion? Will not your example corrupt the manners of many around you? The Apoſtle ſpeaks—and he ſpeaks with tears—concerning ſome, who ſo walk that they are enemies to the croſs of Chriſt.

When I ſpeak to the profeſſors of religion, I mean to comprehend all, who, in any way, declare their belief of the Goſpel; yea, all who have been conſecrated to God. You ought to regard your baptiſm as a ſeal of your covenant obligations, unleſs you mean to renounce it. And if you renounce this, what do you leſs than renounce the Saviour?—Baptiſm is into Chriſt.

The Goſpel has come to you. You either believe, or diſbelieve it. If you believe it, then profeſs it, and live agreeably to it. If you mean to reject it, beware leſt that come upon you, which is written in the Prophets; 'Behold, ye deſpiſers, and wander and periſh.'

3. To ſtand faſt in the Lord, is to maintain the *power* of his religion.

There are ſome, who have but a ſuperficial religion.

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They are not willing that the form of godlineſs ſhould be diſcontinued in the world, nor do they intend to renounce it themſelves. But they chooſe to make their religion an eaſy pliant thing, which may comport with their intereſts and humours, and will not impoſe too great reſtraints. Hence they are carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines. They follow every new ſect, hoping to find ſomething which will pleaſe their imagination, and pacify their conſcience. They are ever learning, but never ſettled in the belief of the truth.

There are ſome, who flatter themſelves, that it is no great matter, what a man believes, if he only acts agreeably to his belief—that great ſtrictneſs in morals is not required, or may be diſpenſed with, where there is a regular attendance on forms, and a warmth of affection in devotional exerciſes. Thus they put the means in the place of the end.

There are ſome, who excuſe the corruptions of their heart, and their acquired habits of vice, under the ſoft and gentle name of natural deſires. And they imagine, God will never condemn them for following thoſe propenſities, which he has put in them as a part of their conſtitution. Thus, by making their own luſts and humours, the ſtandard by which to judge of virtue and vice, they form to themſelves a licentious religion, which tolerates their iniquities, and calms their

their fears. They explain away the ſubſtance, and leave only the ſhadow ; and under this they ſit with a falſe delight.

Beware that you indulge no ſuch deluſive ſentiments. If religion was deſigned to prepare you for heavenly happineſs, it muſt form you to a temper capable of that happineſs. As that conſiſts in the enjoyment of God, religion muſt transform you into the image of God.

Obſerve the ſtated exerciſes of ſecret religion, ſuch as ſelf-examination, meditation and prayer. If theſe are thrown aſide, you cannot experience the real power of godlineſs. This conſiſts in pious regards to God, and fixed reſolutions for his ſervice, which can be maintained only by intercourſe with him, and converſe with yourſelves.

4. A faithful attendance on the *ordinances* of the Goſpel is implied in your ſtanding faſt in the Lord.

Thus the Apoſtle teaches us : 'Having liberty,' ſays he, 'to enter into the holieſt by the blood of Jeſus, let us draw near with a true heart, in the full aſſurance of faith—Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering—Let us conſider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forſaking the aſſembling of ourſelves together.'

The ordinances, which God has inſtituted, are high-

ly important, and cannot be neglected without great diſhonour to him, and awful danger to yourſelves.

Let me exhort parents to bring their children to baptiſm. Though of late there has been a great increaſe of baptiſms, ſtill there are among us ſome houſeholds unbaptized.

I ſpeak now only to thoſe, who acknowledge the right of infants to baptiſm; for this is not a time to bring forward matters of controverſy. If you believe that baptiſm is an inſtitution of God; and that, under the Goſpel, as under former diſpenſations of the covenant of grace, children are to be dedicated to him—if you recollect, that under the patriarchal, as well as Jewiſh diſpenſation, the ſeal of God's covenant was to be applied to them—if you call to mind, that, in the firſt creation of man, God ordained that children ſhould be a ſeed to himſelf, and made this ordinance a part of his covenant with Adam, as the prophet Malachi obſerves; you will feel yourſelves bound to preſent your children to God, and to procure for them the appointed token of their covenant relation to him.

The proſperity of the church greatly depends on the religious education of children, and the attendant bleſſing of God. And your conſecration of them to him, in his inſtituted way, will be a mean of awakening your attention to their education, and of obtaining his bleſſing for them.

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It is with pleaſure, that I have beheld, in months paſt, the great increaſe of communicants at the Lord's table. But ſtill there are many who turn away from it. Of the youths few take a ſeat there. I hope there are, among you, my children, thoſe who really reverence the ordinance of Chriſt's ſupper. The numbers, which I often ſee ſitting around, as ſerious ſpectators of the ſolemnity, afford a pleaſing expectation, that more will draw near, and Chriſt's table will be full. If you are detained from this ordinance by religious fears, your very fears prove your right to it. For a fear of offending God by an unworthy attendance, will not ſtop here. It will reſtrain you from offending him by other unworthy conduct. And a fear thus operating indicates a heart prepared to draw near to God.

But if you look on the ordinance with indifference; conſider; it is an inſtitution of Chriſt deſigned for the commemoration of his death; and therefore indifference to it muſt involve great ingratitude, impiety and guilt.

We wiſh to ſee Chriſt's church increaſing, and the young ſubſcribing with their hands to him. But we wiſh, that all who name the name of Chriſt may depart from iniquity, and walk worthy of him, who has called them to his kingdom and glory.

Suffer me alſo, my brethren, to call your attention to the ſtated worſhip of the Lord's day.

That

That ſocial worſhip is a divine appointment, adapted to the benefit of civil ſociety, as well as to the promotion of vital godlineſs, you will not deny. And yet it cannot be diſſembled, that, in the preſent day, multitudes treat it with great indifference. Let not this indifference be ſeen among you. If you, who are profeſſors of religion, and heads of families, neglect, and allow your children to neglect the worſhip of the ſanctuary, it is natural to apprehend, that indifference to this divine appointment will more and more prevail; and, perhaps, when a vacancy ſhall take place among you—this event is not remote—you will have grown ſo regardleſs of God's worſhip, that his houſe will be left you deſolate. It would be painful to realize, that the next generation will come forward and grow up without baptiſm—without public inſtruction—without regard for the ſabbath, or for the bible.

Conſider the matter as it immediately reſpects yourſelves. Is an averſion to God's worſhip conſiſtent with the temper which belongs to heaven? Would not an attendance upon it aſſiſt you in your perſonal religion, and in the education of your children? Would not your good example be highly beneficial to thoſe who are coming after you? Say one to another, 'Come and let us go up to the houſe of the Lord.' Let your feet ſtand within its walls. Let it appear as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

There

There is another thing which I beg leave juſt to mention. It is what muſt ſoon call your attention, unleſs—which heaven prevent—you ceaſe to be a religious ſociety. I ſhall not dwell on the ſubject; but I often think of it with concern. It is providing a decent and convenient houſe for divine worſhip. Whenever there ſhall be a vacancy here, to ſupply it will be exceedingly difficult—perhaps impracticable, in the preſent ſtate of your houſe of worſhip. The building of a meeting-houſe, and the ſettling of a miniſter at the ſame time, may be attended with ſuch embarraſments, as will much endanger your peace and tranquility. Your own prudence will lead you to deliberate, whether the concurrence of two ſo important tranſactions, ought not, if poſſible, to be prevented.

5. Your ſtanding faſt in the Lord will much depend on the maintenance of *family religion*. If this is generally neglected, all religion will ſoon diſappear. Joſhua thought ſo, when he ſaid to the people of Iſrael, 'If it ſeem evil to you to ſerve the Lord, chooſe ye, this day, whom ye will ſerve. But, as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.'

Attend, then, to the religious education of your children, and afford them your aſſiſtance in the things which concern their preſent uſefulneſs and future happineſs.

Train them up to induſtry in ſome honeſt calling. Reſtrain their irregular propenſities. Encourage every virtuous diſpoſition. Furniſh them with the neceſſary

ceſſary means of mental improvement. Walk before them in a perfect way. Suffer them not to become the companions of fools; but teach them to aſſociate with the wiſe. Maintain ſocial worſhip in your houſes, and require their orderly attendance. This will facilitate your domeſtic government, and obtain the divine bleſſing on your houſeholds.

6. The Apoſtle having expreſſed his deſire, that the Theſſalonian believers ſhould ſtand faſt in the Lord, adds this requeſt, 'The Lord make you to increaſe and abound in *love one toward another, and toward all men*, to the end he may *eſtabliſh* your hearts unblameable in holineſs.'

That you may ſtand faſt in Chriſt, you muſt cultivate a ſpirit of candour and charity, in oppoſition to bigotry—a ſpirit of peace and humility in oppoſition to ſpiritual pride, from whence comes contention.

Regard religion as important; but be moſt zealous for the ſubſtance of it; not for mere circumſtances and appendages. Be ſteady in your chriſtian profeſſion; but never condemn thoſe who differ from you, unleſs the difference affects the foundation of chriſtianity.

Candour and condeſcention are eſſential to a Goſpel temper and conduct, and neceſſary to the peace and edification of Chriſtian churches.

Hitherto, my brethren, you have maintained a commendable union. I do not find, that any controverſy has

has ever exiſted in this church, which has required the interpoſition of an eccleſiaſtical council. 'Let brotherly love continue.' Dangers have attended you; but, by the good hand of providence, you have been ſafely conducted through them. Dangers again may ariſe; but be at peace among yourſelves, and the God of peace will be with you. 'Mark them, who cauſe diviſions and offenſes, contrary to the doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them; for they who are ſuch ſerve not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly, and with good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple.'

There is an hypocriſy, which, to ſerve a party deſign, affects a zeal for the purity of the church. This, as long as it can work ſecretly, under the diſguiſe of piety, will produce great miſchief. Excepting this, there is nothing more dangerous to the peace of the church, than religious bigotry; by which I mean, laying ſuch unreaſonable weight on certain opinions and forms, as to exclude from our charity and fellowſhip all who diſſent from us.

Thoſe ſects, which ſet up ſeparate communions, to the excluſion of other Chriſtians, and are induſtrious to make proſelytes from other churches, that they may increaſe a party of their own, are building on a foundation very different from that which Chriſt has marked out. Never patronize and encourage any ſect founded on ſo narrow a baſis—any ſect which rears up itſelf b

mater

materials ſurreptitiouſly collected from other buildings.

To undermine one chriſtian ſociety in order to build up another, is the eſſence of bigotry, as diſtinguiſhed from charity. On this principle few chriſtian churches can exiſt; for you will find, in the ſame vicinity, few Chriſtians who do not, in ſome things, differ from one another. And if every diſagreement muſt cauſe a ſeparation, ſcarcely two can walk together. And we find in fact, that ſocieties, erected on this narrow baſis, ſoon totter and fall into ruins.

In this imperfect ſtate there muſt be charity and condeſcention, elſe there can be no union and ſtability in chriſtian churches.

I remind you of theſe things, though ye know them, and are eſtabliſhed in the preſent truths. I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to ſtir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing, that ſhortly I muſt put off this tabernacle. And I deſire, that, after my deceaſe, ye may be able to have theſe things always in remembrance.

The time here allotted us is ſhort. Soon our days on earth will be numbered: Let us fill them up with uſefulneſs, that we may finiſh them with joy.

When I look back, I am ſurprized to ſee how ſoon forty years have paſſed away. The time which remains to me, and to ſome of you, will ſcarcely be perfected. Let us, who are walking together in the

downward

downward path of life, contemplate our end, and apply our hearts to wiſdom.

There are many preſent in this aſſembly, who have no recollection of the commencement of my miniſtry. Their exiſtence began at a later date. But you, my friends, will ſoon find yourſelves in the liſt of the aged. You already begin to take a ſhare in the buſineſs of ſociety. You, perhaps, will have a part to act in the ſettlement of another miniſter. May your hearts be filled with thoſe pious ſentiments, and ſocial affections, which will qualify you for the part aſſigned you in this world, and for the happineſs propoſed to you in the next.

May this chriſtian ſociety, which has ſtood for an hundred years, ſtill ſtand faſt in the Lord. The pious zeal of your fathers laid a foundation for the privileges, which you here enjoy: See that you, with equal zeal, tranſmit them to ſucceeding generations. May they, who ſhall live an hundred years hence, recognize your works of piety, as you do theirs, who lived an hundred years ago.

To awaken in us the zeal recommended, and to enforce the advice offered to us, we will take a view of the origin and progreſs of this ſociety, and of the dealings of providence toward it.

The town of *Springfield*, (of which this town remained a part until 1774) was ſettled from Roxbury,

in the year 1636, juſt 16 years after the arrival of our fathers at Plymouth. In the preceeding year, plantations were begun in Windſor, Hartford and Wethersfield, by adventurers from Dorcheſter, Newtown, (now called Cambridge) and Watertown. Gov. Winthrop, in his Journal, ſays, "In October 1635, about 60 men women and children, went by land towards Connecticut, with their cows, heifers and ſwine, and after a tedious and difficult journey, arrived ſafe there.—But the people from Dorcheſter who removed their cattle before winter, loſt the greateſt part of them. Some, however, which came late, and could not be put over the river, lived well thro' the winter without any hay. The people were put to great ſtraits for want of proviſions. They ate malt, grains, and acorns; and they loſt near £2000 worth of cattle."

At this time cattle of all kinds were extremely dear. "A good cow was valued at £25 or £30; a pair of oxen at £40; ſheep at 50ſ a head."

The reaſon alledged for theſe emigrations was, that "all the towns within the Bay began to be much ſtraitened by their nearneſs to one another, and by the great increaſe of their cattle."

But though the want of room might be the firſt motive, a ſpirit of enterprize ſtrongly co-operated with it: For the emigrations were ſo large, that the old towns were thereby exceedingly weakened and diminiſhed.

Governor

Governor Winthrop ſays, "In 1636, Mr. Hooker, paſtor of the church of Newtown and the beſt of his congregation went to Connecticut and drove thither 160 heads of cattle." And from Dorcheſter Mr. Warham the paſtor removed with almoſt his whole church, ſo that ſoon after we find the people in that town deliberating on the formation of a *new* church, "a great part of the old one being gone to Connecticut."

The firſt planters in Springfield were no more than eight *men*. The number of women and children I have not been able to learn. Their firſt intention was to have ſettled on the weſt ſide of the river, as did the adventurers in the towns below. Accordingly they began to build in the great meadow, at a place from that circumſtance denominated, and ſtill called *Houſe Meadow*; but on the friendly advice of the natives, that the place was ſubject to inundations, they changed their purpoſe, and removed to the other ſide.

Though they were few in number, yet, animated with a ſpirit of piety, they early provided for the ſettlement of the Goſpel-Miniſtry. And within one year after the plantation began, Mr. Moxon, their firſt miniſter, was with them.

The people on Connecticut river generally lived in peace with their Indian neighbours. The town of Wethersfield, however, in the ſecond year after the ſettlement began, met with a ſevere blow. "Sequin, a

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head man of the river Indians, gave lands on the river to the Engliſh, that he might ſit down by them and be protected. But when he came to Wethersfield and ſet up his wigwam, the people drove him away by force. Reſenting the wrong, but wanting ſtrength to revenge it, he ſecretly drew in the Pequots, who came up the river, and killed ſix men at their work, and three women, and captivated two girls, and deſtroyed a horſe and twenty cows." As this miſchief was in conſequence of a provocation offered on the part of the Engliſh, they, by advice from the governor and magiſtrates in Boſton, inſtead of proſecuting a war, made a new agreement with the Indians of the river.

The people in Springfield ſuffered no moleſtation from *their* Indians, until the year 1675, which was a time of great calamity.

The famous warrior king Philip, who had ever been an enemy to the Engliſh, being driven from his head quarters at Briſtol, then called *mount Hope*, came with his Indians to the weſtward; and, having deſtroyed Brookfield, advanced to the river, and excited among the Indians here a general diſaffection to the Engliſh. The people in this and the northern towns on the river, began to apprehend danger, and to put themſelves in a ſtate of defence. The people in Springfield, however, relying on the profeſſions of the Indians, felt too ſecure. Hoſtilities committed in the towns above, in Auguſt and September, increaſed their concern; but

ſtill

ſtill they did not realize their danger, until, by a meſſage from Windſor, they were informed, that 300 of Philip's men had joined with the Springfield Indians, and were then in the Indian fort on Long Hill, and that their intention was to deſtroy the town. This plot was diſcloſed by one of the Windſor Indians. On this alarming intelligence, the people fled to their fortified houſes, and thus ſaved themſelves from a general maſſacre.

In the morning of the 5th of October, O. S. two men, with an intention to examine the truth of the information from Windſor, ſet out for the Indian fort; but were fired upon by the way; one was killed, the other mortally wounded. The conflagration of the town immediately enſued, in which were conſumed about 30 houſes, and 20 barns. Only two or three houſes eſcaped: Theſe were fortified. Aſſiſtance was ſent from other towns, but arrived too late. Beſides the two men above mentioned, there were ſeveral wounded, and one mortally. One woman was ſlain.*

One of the men killed in the morning in the way toward the fort, was Mr. Thomas Miller, from whom deſcended the family of that name in this pariſh.

At this time there were ſome houſes in Longmeadow, and a number on this ſide of the river, none of which were deſtroyed. The enemies firſt object was the deſtruction

* *See Mr. Breck's Century Sermon.*

ſtruction of the principal ſettlement. Before they could extend their operations, ſuccours arrived.

But in the ſpring following, ſome miſchief was done on this ſide of the river. In Chicopee-ſtreet, ſo called, about a mile north of the meeting-houſe, the Indians killed a young man named Pelatiah Morgan; and at the ſame time, captivated a lad, who was in company with him. The lad afterward returned.

In the ſame year, by the beſt information I can obtain, Mr. Abel Leonard, who lived near the ſouth bank of Agawam, was ſhot in his canoe, as he was paſſing that river. One of his deſcendants, of the fifth generation, now dwells on the ſame lot.

There is an imperfect tradition of others, captivated, and ſlain, of whom I can collect no ſatisfactory account.

Within the memory of our aged people, ſome of the houſes here were fortified and garriſoned; and within about 50 years paſt, watches were occaſionally appointed to patrole our ſtreets, for fear of the enemy.

Happy are we, who ſleep in our houſes, and go forth to our labours in ſafety, & have none to make us afraid.

At what time the ſettlements on the weſt ſide of the river began, I cannot learn with exactneſs; but it was probably as early as the year 1660. In the ſpace of 39 years, the houſes in that part of the town, which is now the firſt pariſh in Springfield, had increaſed from perhaps about 8 to but little more than 30: and yet in

1664,

1664, which was 11 years before, there were, in the whole town, 73 *male inhabitants*. There muſt therefore have been a conſiderable number at that time in other parts of the town.

In 1662, there was granted to John Riley, a *houſe lot*, on the weſt ſide of the river, conditioned, that he ſoon erected a houſe upon it. And two years after, there was granted to Thomas Cooper, on the ſouth ſide of Agawam, a *houſe lot*, located with relation to a cellar, which he had already dug.

Within a few years after this, I find grants of *houſe lots* in divers places; ſome as far weſt as Paucatuck-brook.

In 1683 there appears to have been a number of inhabitants here; for, in this year, on the 18th of March, a boat containing ſundry perſons, who, on the Lord's day, were returning from public worſhip, was overſet in the great river, and three perſons were drowned; viz. Reice and John Bedurtha, and Lydia the wife of Joſeph Bedurtha. Another woman, by the name of Rogers, ſuppoſed at firſt to have been dead, was reſtored.*

In the year 1696, which was 60 years after the ſettlement of the town began, the inhabitants on the weſt ſide of the river, making about 30 families, were incorporated.

* *The firſt names of Planters, on this ſide of the river, which I have been able to find, are Riley and Cooper. Soon after theſe are Foſter, Jones, Petty, Scot, Barber, Rogers, Miller, Parſons, Morgan, Fowler, Leonard, Bedurtha, Ely, Bagg, Day, Merrick. Theſe names, moſt or all, were here before the pariſh was incorporated. Some of them are now extinct—ſome are numerous and reſpectable.*

ted into a diſtinct pariſh. In June 1698 a church was gathered, and the rev'd John Woodbridge was ordained its paſtor. He died in June 1618. He was well remembered by many people, who were living when I came to this place. From them and others I have learned, that he ſuſtained an amiable character, as a gentleman, a chriſtian and a miniſter.*

What was the growth of the pariſh, and the number of baptiſms, admiſſions and deaths, during his miniſtry, I cannot find; for his records, if he hept any, were loſt ſoon after his death.

The firſt deacons in this church, Meſs. John Barber, and Ebenezer Parſons, were choſen in 1700. The former died in 1712, aged 70; the latter in 1752, aged 84 years. Eight others have ſuſtained and exerciſed the deacon's office in this church; of whom four have deceaſed. Their ages were 92, 80, 75, and 88 years.¶ Four are ſtill living, of whom one is now 87, and one 85 years old. §

In June, 1702, this meeting-houſe was erected. It aroſe in the very beginning of the preſent century. May the next century, which is juſt at hand, as early ſee

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* *He left four ſons, who were men of worthy characters. Two of them were miniſters. One ſettled in Southadley; the other in a pariſh of Newhaven.*

¶ *Meſs. Joſeph Ely, John Ely, Samuel Day and Joſeph Merrick.*

§ *Meſs. Nathaniel Atchinſon, and Jonathan White. The deacons of the ſouth church are all ſtill living. The two firſt, Meſs. John Leonard and Reuben Leonard, were choſen in 1762, and are now, the former in his 87th, the latter in his 81ſt year.*

a new houſe riſing among you. 'Build unto God a ſanctuary, that he may dwell among you.' And 'be ye all builded together for an habitation to God through the Spirit.'

In June, 1720, the rev'd. Samuel Hopkins was ordained the ſecond paſtor of this church. He died in October, 1755, in the 62d year of his age, and 36th of his Miniſtry. His character is well known, and his memory ſtill dear to the aged. He was highly eſteemed by all his acquaintance. *

Within this pariſh, which then included the whole tract, now called Weſt-Springfield, there were baptized, during his miniſtry, 660 perſons, and 210 admitted to the Lord's table. Of deaths I cannot find, that he kept any record. At the time of his death, there were about 200 families within the limits of the original pariſh. To this number it had increaſed in 60 years. The annual increaſe was 3 families nearly.

In reviewing our narrative, one thought will naturally ſtrike your minds; and let it be deeply impreſſed; that your fathers, from the firſt ſettlement of theſe towns, and even of the country, were ſtedfaſt in the religion of Chriſt—that in their deepeſt poverty they were zealous to maintain the inſtituted worſhip of God

—and

* *His conſort, Mrs. Eſther Hopkins, daughter of Rev. Timothy Edwards, of Windſor died June 1766, aged 72 years—He left two ſons, both now living, one of whom is miniſter of Hadley; & one daughter who married to the Hon. J. Worthington, Eſq. LL. D. & died Nov. 1766, aged 36 years*

—and that the care and bleſſing of providence did remarkably attend them. 'Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, ſo ſtand faſt in the Lord.'

After the deceaſe of Mr. Hopkins, the pariſh was vacant about 10 months. In March, 1756, I began to preach with you; In July following was invited, and on the 25th of Auguſt was ſeparated to the work of the miniſtry in this place.

All the miniſters, who took a part in the ſolemnity of my ordination, are among the dead: and only two* ſurvive of thoſe who conſtituted the ordaining council, which was uncommonly numerous.

In 1757, the ſouthern part of the original pariſh was erected into a diſtinct pariſh, containing about 75 families. In September, 1762, a church was formed, conſiſting of Chriſtians of different denominations, who, with great appearance of candour, waved their diſtinguiſhing ſentiments, and covenanted to attend on the ſame miniſtry, and commune at the ſame table. On the week following, the rev'd. Sylvanus Griſwold was ordained their paſtor.

A little before the death of Mr. Hopkins, a number of inhabitants in the north part of the original pariſh, uniting with a number on the eaſt ſide of the great river,

* *Rev. Meſs. Mackinſtry, and Hopkins of Hadley.*

ver, were incorporated into one pariſh; and, in 1752, called and ſettled the rev'd. John Mackinſtry.

That part which lies on the weſt ſide of the river, by a late act of diviſion, is become a diſtinct ſociety, and is the third pariſh in this town. It has a meeting-houſe; but is deſtitute of a miniſter. We hope it will not long remain ſo.

When the ſecond, or ſouth pariſh was incorporated, there remained in this about 95 families, and 550 ſouls. Ten years ago the number of families was 154, and of ſouls 897. Within the ſame limits, the families are now 171, and the ſouls about 990. Nine families have lately been annexed to this from the ſouth pariſh. The preſent number of families is 180, and of ſouls about 1050. The average increaſe of the pariſh for 40 years has been 2 families a year. The progreſs in the laſt 10 years has been nearly the ſame, as in preceding years. In this period the emigrations have much exceeded the immigrations.

In the firſt 20 years of my miniſtry, the number of deaths was 208; the mean number of ſouls, I ſuppoſe, was about 670; the proportion, ſomething leſs than 1 to 3. In the ſpace of 30 years, the number of deaths was 346; the mean number of ſouls about 724; the proportion a little ſhort of 1 to 2. In the whole peri-

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od of 40 years, the number of deaths is 473; the mean number of ſouls 772; the proportion nearly 8 to 13, or ſomething leſs than 2 to 3. In a period of 66 years, the number of deaths will probably be equal to the number of ſouls living in the middle of that period; i. e. about 900.*

Of the 470 perſons, who have died in 40 years, 140 had arrived to the 50th; 111 to the 60th; 86 to the 70th; 43 to the 80th; 5 to the 90th; and 4 to the 95th year of their age. 'If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; let him remember the days of darkneſs, for they ſhall be many.'

The baptiſms of children, whoſe parents were members of this church, have, in the time of my miniſtry, been 837. Of theſe 48 have been baptized ſince the beginning of July 1795, which is little more than a year.

Admiſſions to the Lord's table, including transfers of relation to this from other churches, there have been 290. Beſides theſe, about 80 have joined themſelves to the church, expreſſing a doubt of their meetneſs for the Lord's table. This church regards all profeſſors, as complete members, and under her watch; but ſhe exerciſes indulgence to tender conſciences. Of the 290 communicants,

* *In the ſpace of 40 years, 29 perſons have been taken from among us by caſualty. In the late war, 6 belonging to the pariſh died in the army, 11 by ſickneſs, and 5 by the ſword of the enemy.*

communicants, 113 have been admitted in the laſt 10 years; and 35 in little more than a year. The increaſe of the church has been much greater in the laſt 10 years of my miniſtry, than in any preceding period of the ſame length. The increaſe, ſince the June of the laſt year, has been diſtinguiſhed. The Lord make you to increaſe more and more in numbers and in good works.

May the remaining part of my miniſtry be rendered more uſeful, than the paſt; and through your prayers may I obtain grace to fulfil the miniſtry, which I have received of the Lord Jeſus to teſtify the goſpel of Chriſt, and thus finiſh my courſe with joy.

Our relation has hitherto ſubſiſted in comfortable peace and friendſhip. May it ſo continue to the end.

I remember, with gratitude, many kindneſſes which I have received; and you have my ardent wiſhes and daily prayers for your tranquility and happineſs.

Among the teſtimonies of your regard and benevolence, there is a recent one for which you will accept my particular thanks. The benefaction to which I allude was ſo liberal and ſeaſonable, and ſo happily adapted to my exigences, that it could not but be gratefully felt. It was made with a cheerfulneſs and ardour, which add much to its intrinſic worth; and with ſo great unanimity, that I confeſs myſelf indebted to you all.

May your benevolence awaken in me a greater dili-

gence in your ſervice. May your union among yourſelves be preſerved. May peace and wiſdom guide all your ſteps. May you never want a miniſter who will heartily feel, ardently pray, and cheerfully labour for you in the Lord. May the word and ſpirit of God never be removed from you, nor from your ſeed nor from your ſeed's ſeed, ever down to the lateſt ſucceſſion of our mortal race.

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them who are ſanctified. And I intreat you for the Lord Jeſus ſake, and for the love of the ſpirit, that you ſtrive together in your prayers and labours for the common intereſt of Chriſt's church, and for the particular intereſt of this ſociety. May my remaining ſervices be accepted of the ſaints, and uſeful to you all. May I come to you with joy, and with you be refreſhed.

May the God of peace be with you all.

AMEN.